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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR MARCH 13, 2006

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for March 13, 2005. Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

HURRIYET / ZAMAN / RADIKAL: The two-day "Explorations for Civil and Democratic Solutions 1- Turkey's Kurdish Issue" conference was held in Istanbul's Bilgi University by the Helsinki Compatriots Association and the Emphaty Group. Police thoroughly searched all conference participants, including Diyarbakir Governor Osman Baydemir. No activities against the conference were held and no hostile incident developed during the first day of the conference (03/12). Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir delivered a speech on the second day of the conference and expressed his concern and anxiety over weakening of ties between Kurds and Turks. Disputes took place between journalist Hasan Cemal and Diyarbakir Bar Association Chairperson Sezgin Tanrikulu, and between Diyarbakir Governor Osman Baydemir and Diyarbakir Women's Center Chaireprson Nebahat Akkoc. Cemal criticized Tanrikulu for blaming the state for every wrong circumstance and for his (Tanrikulu's) one-sided approach. Cemal made a call to the Kurdish intelligentsia to adopt a critical approach when talking about the PKK. Nebahat Akkoc reacted when Osman Baydemir said that Kurdish women should not be branded as ignorant if they have not learned how to speak Turkish.

OZGUR GUNDEM: The daily criticized Istanbul's Bilgi University conference for excluding parties in the Kurdish issue who have been trying to work out solutions to address the matter. The daily separately reported that Kurdish intellectuals of Syrian origin were holding a conference in Washington to discuss Syria's Kurdish issue.

HURRIYET / ZAMAN / OZGUR GUNDEM / CUMHURIYET: Police identified the suicide bomber who killed three and wounded 19 people in Van on March 9. Twenty-nine-year-old assailant's name is reportedly Devrim Solduk, and he is allegedly a PKK member. Zaman daily noted that the bomber was identified when the terrorist organization released his name on its internet site. According to the site, the terrorist organization dismissed any connection to the bombing and said that the activity was carried out upon the individual decision of the terrorist. The website further announced that the bomb went off before the perpetrator was able to reach his target. Meanwhile, DTP's Van branch condemned the bomb attack and its members left flowers at the site of the incident.

CUMHURIYET / HURRIYET / ZAMAN / OZGUR GUNDEM / RADIKAL: A clash broke out between the terrorists and security officers during a military operation which was launched on March 9 in Sirnak's Gabar Mountain. A commissioned officer was killed during the clash. Turkish military sent helicopters to the region to aid the operation. Zaman daily pointed out that this military operation was launched before the Newruz celebrations.

HURRIYET: A deputy from Motherland Party submitted a question to the Turkish Parliament concerning Mehmet Ali Altindag, a businessman and owner of Soz TV station, who gave statements to the parliamentary commission probing Semdinli case and who made allegations against Land Forces Commander Buyukanit, as having won millions of Turkish lira-worth contracts to date to carry out public undertakings.

ZAMAN: According to the daily, a terrorist organization has been launching sites on the internet feigning as official sites of the Turkish Armed Forces. By means of this method, nearly 80 sites of the terrorist organization have been publishing propaganda against the Turkish military.

ZAMAN: Syria dissolved one of its organizations that was established in 1989 by its intelligence agency to annex the Hatay province in Turkey.

OZGUR GUNDEM: The daily has been reporting preparations of the DTP branches in Osmaniye, Tunceli, Hakkari and Mersin provinces ahead of Newruz celebrations. Reportedly, the torch of the Newruz would be lit in Hakkari's Semdinli district. Applications submitted by the Newruz committees to the governors' offices in certain separate cities to receive authorization have been turned down on grounds that application forms included the letter "w" and "o" in the Kurdish word Newroz. (Note: Turks spell the event as "Nevruz." End Note.)

CUMHURIYET: The court ruled that one of the three defendants in the case prosecuting three suspects of the February 13 bomb attack on a supermarket in Istanbul be arrested while he stood trial.

RADIKAL: Semdinli Jandarma Commander Major Erdem Yilmaz disclosed to the parliamentary commission probing Semdinli case that he (Yilmaz) was the one who released the two non-commissioned officers Ali Kaya and Ozcan Ildeniz, the defendants of the November 9 (2005) Semdinli incident. Yilmaz said that he gave the orders to send these officers to a military unit in a military vehicle following the incident. Yilmaz said that he had known the two officers because he had met them 15 or 16 times, since those officers were divulging intelligence information to Jandarma officials.

EVRENSEL: The daily reported that political parties and civil society organizations staged protests in Mersin, Adana and Hatay provinces against the U.S.'s current Middle East policies. The political parties holding the protests were: EMEP (Labor Party), DTP (Democratic Society Party), SDP (Socialist Democracy Party), ODP (Freedom and Solidarity Party), and ESP (Socialist Party of the Oppressed People).

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